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OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

OF A

TOWN MEETING,

HELD AT THE CHINESE MUSEUM, IN RELATION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A

DRY DOCK,

AND THE

DEFENCES OF THE DELAWARE RIVER;

CONTAINING THE SPEECH OF

COL. JAMES PAGE,

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE MEETING, AND THE APPOINTMENT
OF THE COMMITTEES.

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# OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

## DRY DOCK MEETING.

Pursuant to public notice, a very large number of the citizens of the City and County of Philadelphia assembled at the Museum Buildings, on Tuesday evening, January 27th, 1846, for the purpose of taking into consideration "the propriety of memorializing Congress for appropriations to build a Dry or Floating Dock at Philadelphia, and providing suitable defences for the River Delaware."

The meeting was called to order by Col. JAMES PAGE, and the following gentlemen were unanimously approved of as officers :

### PRESIDENT,

Hon. JOHN T. SMITH, N. Liberties.

### VICE PRESIDENTS,

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Hyman Gratz,      | Henry D. Gilpin,       |
| Charles S. Riche, | Henry Lelar,           |
| S. V. Merrick,    | Matthew L. Bevan,      |
| Lewis Paleske,    | George Smith,          |
| John B. Myers,    | William Craig,         |
| Geo. Cadwalader,  | Isaac W. Norris,       |
| Richard S. Smith, | Robert M. Lewis,       |
| Joseph Snyder,    | Samuel Edwards, of De- |
| Francis Tiernan,  | laware County,         |
| William Rawle,    | Isaac Mickle, of N. J. |

### SECRETARIES,

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| John C. Martin,  | Woodburne Potter, |
| Henry J. Biddle, | Joshua P. Haven.  |

On motion, the following names were added as Vice Presidents :

Thomas D. Grover, of Southwark.  
John Vaughan, of Kensington.  
Jacob Sheerer, of Spring Garden.

Other nominations having been made, it was, on motion, Resolved, that the nominations be closed.

Col. JAMES PAGE was then loudly called for, and requested to address the meeting on the important subjects before it, which he did as follows :

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :—

The call for the meeting was published at a time when apprehensions existed in the public mind in regard to the consequences likely to flow from our relations with England. The arrival of the next packet was looked to as settling the question of peace or war. Happily that arrival has somewhat allayed these apprehensions, and strengthened the hope of peace. Peace is our true policy.— It is a duty we owe humanity, to cherish and preserve it. But no peace can be desired or will prove enduring that is obtained at the slightest sacrifice of national rights or national honor. Concessions in either of these particulars may delay a war, but cannot establish peace on a lasting foundation. The nation that gains by one encroachment, will be sure to try another. Purchased peace is worse than war. War cannot be declared by this nation without justice and right go with it,—such is the intelligence, such the controlling force of public opinion. Should war come upon this question of Oregon, (which I sincerely desire may be averted,) it will find us a united people, because we have the right. To preserve peace, is to be prepared for war. The appeal which I mean to make to you to-night, is therefore presented under no excitement. It is based upon principle, and goes to your sense of right. It is no more in place now than it would have been five years ago when no apprehensions of war existed.

The subject is one to which I have heretofore repeatedly called the attention of the public. I am not here as a political speaker

nor partizan—but, as a resident of Philadelphia—a citizen of the great Commonwealth we all delight to honor—to ask for an appropriation for a Dry Dock, the proper uses of our Navy Yard and suitable defences for the Delaware, not because of the present attitude of our Foreign relations, but because it is the duty and interest of the General Government to provide them. It is a right, based upon necessity, economy and convenience.

The Constitution of the United States gives Congress the power of raising imposts and levying taxes from the members of the confederacy; and it makes it their duty to provide for the common defence and general welfare, and to create and maintain a Navy.

Now our City and State pay a full share of the burthens, and are of course entitled to their full share of the benefits of Government. This, neither has received, and you are now assembled to decide two questions:

1st. Shall Congress be asked to build a Dry Dock?

2nd. Shall Congress be asked to provide suitable defences for the Delaware?

The Navy Yard here, has been established for many years—jurisdiction over the soil has been ceded, and exemption from taxes granted, with a view to make it a Naval Station in fact, as well as in name. For a long period of time, however, it has been treated with indifference and neglect, and I am satisfied that feelings of hostility are entertained in regard to it, and that it is the policy of some, to permit it to sink into insignificance, and finally to destroy it. A review of certain facts will establish the correctness of my opinion.

The Secretary of the Navy reported our war vessels for 1845 as follows:—

|                   | In Com. | In Ord'y. | Building. | Total. |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Ships of the Line | 4       | 2         | 5         | 11     |
| Frigates          | 7       | 4         | 3         | 14     |
| Sloops of War     | 15      | 6         | 2         | 23     |
| Brigs             | 5       | 1         | 0         | 6      |
| Schooners         | 5       | 1         | 0         | 6      |
| Steamers          | 6       | 3         | 2         | 11     |
| Store Ships       | 4       | 1         | 0         | 5      |

Total vessels of all kinds 76

Of this number, the following were built here:

|                     |   |                |          |
|---------------------|---|----------------|----------|
| 3 Ships of the Line | { | The Franklin   | in 1815. |
|                     |   | " N. Carolina  | .. 1820. |
|                     |   | " Pennsylvania | " 1837.  |

|             |   |               |         |
|-------------|---|---------------|---------|
| 3 Frigates, | } | United States | " 1797. |
|             |   | Guerriere     | " 1814. |
| 2 Sloops,   | } | Raritan       | " 1842. |
|             |   | Vandalia      | " 1828. |
| 1 Schooner  | } | Dale          | " 1838  |
| 2 Steamers  | } | Dolphin       | " 1821. |
|             |   | Mississippi   | " 1841. |
|             |   | Princeton     | " 1842. |

For nearly half a century, but eleven vessels have been produced at this station, and five of these were built prior to 1821. In the last twenty-five years, but one ship of the line, one frigate, two steamers, and two sloops of war have been set afloat here. So far as this branch of the service goes, but little encouragement has been extended to our ship-wrights and other mechanics.

Let us see what has been done towards improving the Yard—here we shall find the condition of affairs worse, if possible.

It is the duty of the Commandant at the Yard to make application, annually, for the sums required for its improvement and usefulness. He is supposed too, and must, from his position and experience be competent to decide on what is necessary for these purposes.

The following table will show what was asked for from the years 1833 to 1846, both included; and what was granted:

| <i>Appropriations asked for. Granted.</i> |          |         |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| In 1833                                   | \$26,753 | \$3,275 |
| " 1834                                    | 39,751   | 6,550   |
| " 1835                                    | 38,113   | 3,520   |
| " 1836                                    | 44,000   | 11,750  |
| " 1837                                    | 105,000  | 33,350  |
| " 1838                                    | 41,206   | 21,500  |
| " 1839                                    | 48,620   | 8,000   |
| " 1840                                    | 62,460   | 5,800   |
| " 1841                                    | 55,231   | 9,000   |
| " 1842                                    | 101,556  | 1,600   |
| " 1843                                    | 102,726  | 4,020   |
| " 1844                                    | 109,091  | 34,615  |
| " 1845                                    | 111,226  | 5,835   |
| " 1846                                    | 112,036  | 8,000   |

Asked in 14 years \$997,799 Granted \$156,815

Now let us ascertain what was done for other Naval Stations for corresponding years. I cannot tell what they *asked* for, but I know (so far as documents will show) what they *got*. It would be curious to discover whether their allowances were in the same disproportion to their demands, which is a marked feature in the Philadelphia allowances; but I have not the means for informing you on this head. Take the year 1834 as a specimen of the dealing with the several stations, and bear in mind that Philadelphia is second to but one city in the Union, as to

population, and first to them all in many respects.

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| In that year, Portsmouth got        | \$40,700         |
| Charlestown, Mass.                  | 86,300           |
| Brooklyn, N. Y.                     | 57,500           |
| Washington,                         | 29,500           |
| Gosport                             | 108,250          |
| Pensacola,                          | 26,000           |
| While Philadelphia was put off with | 6,550            |
| when she asked for \$39,751.        |                  |
|                                     | <u>\$354,800</u> |

She gets a fifty-fourth part of the whole, while Portsmouth gets more than a tenth!

I will now call your attention to another statement—one showing the amounts granted for the improvements of other Navy Yards, from 1838 to 1846, inclusive, excepting the years 1843 and 1845

| Yrs. | at                | at                | at                | at                | at                | at                |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|      | Navy Yard N. York | Navy Yard N. York | Navy Yard N. York | Navy Yard N. York | Navy Yard N. York | Navy Yard N. York |
|      | Portsmouth.       | Boston.           | N. York           | Washington.       | Norfolk.          | Pensacola.        |
| 1838 | \$20,000          | \$74,000          | \$61,000          | \$30,000          | \$77,500          | \$76,500          |
| 1839 | 30,000            | 26,000            | 7,500             | 26,000            | 61,000            | 25,800            |
| 1840 | 20,000            | 17,000            | 18,000            | 20,000            | 17,250            | 13,000            |
| 1841 | 25,000            | 42,000            | 78,000            | 11,000            | 49,000            | 20,000            |
| 1842 | 47,425            | 32,960            | 130,600           | 15,300            | 70,557            | 37,300            |
| 1843 |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| 1844 | 44,220            | 121,201           | 81,118            | 46,230            | 124,680           | 50,137            |
| 1845 |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
| 1846 | 8,837             | 29,600            | 208,319           | 13,160            | 37,000            | 117,000           |
|      | <u>\$195,482</u>  | <u>\$342,761</u>  | <u>\$674,537</u>  | <u>\$161,690</u>  | <u>\$439,980</u>  | <u>\$338,937</u>  |

Thus, in 9 years, Portsmouth got \$195,482  
 Boston, 342,760  
 New York, 674,537  
 Washington, 161,690  
 Norfolk, 439,980  
 Pensacola, 338,937  
 While Philad'a., asking \$744,182, got 98,370

Boston got \$342,761—Norfolk \$439,980; while it costs \$18,000 more to build a sloop of the same class at Boston than here, and from 6 to \$16,000 more at Norfolk.

New York gets \$674,537, while it costs \$22,000 more to build a steamer there, than here.

Truly these three stations must have friends at Court. In these 9 years, 4 ves-

sels were built here, the "Raritan," "Mississippi," "Dale" and "Princeton."

By referring to a preceding statement, it will be found that Philadelphia received in 14 years, but \$156,815; falling behind the lowest amount in the above list, that appropriated to Washington in nine years, some five thousand dollars; and it must be further observed that the amounts for the other stations for 1843 and 1845 are not on this statement.

Carefully examining and comparing these statements, the question presents itself—is there any reason, why certain stations should be fed to fatness by the powers with whom the matter rests, while this is literally starved to death?

Can there be personal interests, individual prejudices, or sectional feeling at work? Are the officers of the United States to act for States only—the States from whence they hail being more favored than others? No such feelings should be permitted to prevail; and he would be an unworthy steward of a high trust, if he acted for a part and not the whole. If there be not some such matter behind the curtain warring against us, what is there to justify this criminal neglect and unjust abandonment of an old established depot?

It is said the port labors under some disadvantages by reason of the length of our river and difficulty of its navigation. These disadvantages may be summed up thus:—distance from the sea, the bar at Fort Mifflin, and the ice in the winter. It must be borne in mind that there is no port in the world without a disadvantage of some kind, and if I cannot convince you that our advantages are numerous and imposing, and the disadvantages nominal, I shall have mistaken my subject.

If distance from the sea be an objection in peace, it is a benefit in war. The station is the less liable to attack, and can be defended against any assault. The application of steam removes every difficulty on the score of distance. It has been shown, through the skill of as generous a man and as gallant an officer as ever trod the deck, (I allude to Commodore Stockton, who is now carrying our stripes and stars upon the broad bosom of the Pacific,) in the performances of his beautiful steamer, the Princeton, that

at all times the port is accessible for those who come as friends and the impediments to navigation are mere shadows.

The bar at Fort Mifflin proves a mere bug-bear. It is not many months since that the Potomac, a frigate of the largest class, sought our harbor. She passed this dreaded bar without the slightest difficulty, with all her armament on board, when the tide was not full, drawing 23 feet water or thereabouts and having two feet water to spare. Had the tide been full there would have been over five feet more than enough for her draught. This is the only vessel of war of any size for many years that has been permitted to enter the Delaware for our city, nor was she allowed to be long absent from it before an effort was made to slander our mechanics, and detract from the station by an allegation that she was repaired here in an unskilful-like manner. While lying at the Navy Yard, she was caulked to the water's edge. In the Gulf of Mexico she sprung a leak and had to return to Pensacola. From thence she was convoyed round to Norfolk by the Princeton steamer and there was taken into the Dry Dock, when it was found that the leak was below the water mark. Skilful and able as our mechanics are, they had not the power to lift the Potomac out of her element, suspend her in the air, and get at her bottom timbers. The want of a Dry Dock led to all this delay in putting her into service and the expense consequent upon her return to one port to be assisted in getting around to another.

As to detention from ice, little need be said. Vessels are liable to this, more or less, at all Northern ports, and the risque here, owing to the changes in our winters, is scarcely worthy of consideration, and with the aid of steamers like the Princeton, if necessity required it, a vessel of war might be got to sea at any time.

If we have ice, other ports have it too—New York has her bar and salt-water, and Norfolk has her bar, barnacles and worms, and these are sure corrodors of copper and destroyers of timber under water.

I have given you all the arguments that can be used against this station. What are those in its favor? Our noble river is the dividing line of three states—New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania. She penetrates

the interior of each, and reaches the regions of white oak timber, necessary in the construction of war vessels. The material can, therefore, be cut down by, and floated upon her surface to the very docks where it is required for use. Our harbor is a perfectly safe one. Ships can lie in security at our wharves, and be free from the dangers of the storm. It is too far removed from the ocean to be liable to a sudden attack. If attempted, a sufficient force could be collected in 48 hours to cut off any enemy daring enough to venture upon an assault. None of them would be left to return to their comrades, or I much mistake the character of our people. The millions of property which should be accumulated at such a naval depot would be safe, at a comparatively small expenditure for their protection. If our Navy Yard can be made properly secure at a small outlay, why should others be established, at exposed points, at an enormous cost for their construction, holding an immense amount of public property, and requiring an expense of millions to protect them; and that protection at last found unavailable. Let the burning of the vessels on the stocks at Washington be remembered. It costs more to build vessels at other stations, and more to secure them from assault, and so we are doubly taxed. Yet these are the favored points. Here, where danger from the inroad of an enemy is nothing, the cost of defence considerably less, and the building of ships cheaper, we are neglected and trampled upon. Is this political economy?

Our city is a healthy one—not subject to pestilence of any kind; with an abundant and cheap market, while her resources in men and material will not suffer by a comparison with any other of our flourishing Capitols. Our artists and mechanics may be equalled, but cannot be surpassed by those of any other nation upon earth. Look at the specimens which they have sent abroad upon the ocean wave. Let the men-of-war which they have been suffered, not encouraged, to build speak for them, from the United States down to the mammoth of the deep—the majestic Pennsylvanian. Let the steamers Mississippi and Princeton (perfect models of that kind of marine construction) be appealed to.

For beauty of shape, perfection of finish,

solidity and speed, the Philadelphia ships stand unrivalled. Steam vessels, from the nature of things, must now become an important feature in naval warfare. Where should they be built but here in the very heart of the coal and iron region?

The advantages then greatly preponderate. Can either of the other ports show as many? But on the score of economy we should have the preference. Crews are obtained here at the cost of our merchant service, and sent at considerable expense, to the other naval stations. The opportunities to desert are thus multiplied and often embraced. But above all the considerations yet named, is the fact, that vessels cost more to build them at other yards than here.

The cost of the Steamer Missouri, built at New York, for hull and labor, was \$333,885  
Mississippi at Philadelphia, 311,689

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| In favor of Philadelphia, | \$22,196     |
| Made up of labor,         | \$20,570     |
| Materials,                | 1,626        |
|                           | <hr/> 22,196 |

*Cost of ten Sloops of War built at different Navy Yards.*

|             |                          |           |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| same class. | Yorktown at Norfolk,     | \$105,000 |
|             | Preble " Portsmouth,     | 102,000   |
|             | Decatur " New York,      | 110,000   |
|             | Marion " Boston,         | 117,000   |
|             | Dale " Philadelphia,     | 99,000    |
|             | Cheaper than the lowest, | \$3,000   |
|             | " " highest,             | 18,000    |
| same class. | Concord at Portsmouth,   | \$115,000 |
|             | Natchez " Norfolk,       | 106,000   |
|             | Fairfield " New York,    | 100,000   |
|             | St. Louis " Washington,  | 102,000   |
|             | Vanda ia " Philadelphia, | 90,000    |
|             | Cheaper than the lowest, | \$10,000  |
|             | " " highest,             | 25,000    |

Building vessels as cheap and as good as they can be built at any other station, will any one deny the right of this, (looking to the position of the City and State in the confederacy, and the duties which the former pays to the General Government) to her full share of government patronage and protection, which it never has received and does not now get?

But when it is thus most conclusively shown, that we can build cheaper, and as good, if not better ships, ought we not to have the preference? nay, is it not our right and the duties of the Bureau, to the whole people, to cause more to be built here than elsewhere? The saving is enormous enough in four vessels to build a fifth.

While it is therefore clear that safety in

war, and economy in peace, point to this Depot, as one pre-eminently worthy of encouragement, it is utterly neglected. I think I am not wrong, therefore, in saying there is hostility somewhere. What the motive is—with whom or where it lies, I cannot say. But it behooves us and our representatives to watch it, and if need be, unmask and oppose it, let it come from what quarter it may. I have already said I believe it to be the policy of some who have a supervision, or exercise an influence upon the subjects referred to, to lessen the usefulness of, and finally to destroy this Navy Yard. This feeling has been at work for years.

It is shown in the neglect and injustice I have proven, and in the manner in which ships are permitted to be built here. The Raritan lingered upon the stocks so long, that she nearly rotted to pieces. The Pennsylvania was fourteen years in travail. The Germantown was laid in 1843, and is yet in her cradle, and from appearances will not be finished for years to come. There is something peculiar in regard to this vessel. Some years ago, the Department determined upon having five sloops built at the various stations by way of experiment. The object was to try the skill, and test the ingenuity of the naval constructors and mechanics—to see which could turn out the finest vessel.—Three of them have been launched at favored ports and are now upon the broad ocean:—but Philadelphia has been denied, so far, the competition which was promised. Is it feared that the result of a trial would furnish an additional argument in favor of this much abused station? I leave that question for others to answer. The practice of permitting vessels to remain a long while upon the stocks, belongs to this station almost entirely. It would seem as if the vessels built here were intended for the air, and not the water.

This feeling is shown in the disparity of persons employed, at this and other stations. Take for example the receiving vessels in 1841.

|              | <i>Officers.</i> | <i>Men &amp; Petty Officers.</i> | <i>Total.</i> |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Boston       | 29               | 301                              | 330           |
| New York     | 29               | 301                              | 330           |
| Norfolk      | 29               | 301                              | 330           |
| Philadelphia | 7                | 12                               | 19!           |

In 1842 the total officers at each station

was as follows :—Charleston, 76 ; Brooklyn, 77 ; Norfolk, 83 ; Philadelphia, 49.

It is shown in the immense appropriations obtained for other stations—of these I have given you some specimens, but none as to appropriations for docks.

|                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Up to 1840, the cost of the Dry Dock                      |           |
| at Charleston, was                                        | \$677,080 |
| “ “ “ at Norfolk,                                         | 974,356   |
| And for timber-sheds and other buildings at these places, | 143,508   |

It is shown in the difference in value, of the material accumulated at each point.

|                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| This on hand, 1st October, 1840, |             |
| At Charleston, was               | \$1,739,000 |
| “ New York, “                    | 1,698,000   |
| “ Norfolk, “                     | 1 504,788   |
| “ Philadelphia, “                | 438,595     |

In all these details, the second City in the Union, holds a very subordinate position.—The only matter in which our poor station is put on a par with the others, is the recruiting service. There we have the same number of officers.

It is shown in the removal of the Naval School to Annapolis—in the repeated attempts which have been made to withdraw the Marine Guard—the late one, to dismantle the barracks, and the omission to extend the wharves for berths ; in the discharge of ordinary laborers from the Yard, and calling upon the seamen to perform a duty out of their line—in the increasing opposition to appropriations, and cutting the supplies down to nominal sums, and in the pretext that vessels cannot be sent here for repairs—while no effort is made to provide a Dry Dock, and the repeated applications for one meet with no support, but encounter resistance.

This brings me to the question—Is a Dry Dock feasible and necessary ? Permit me to read to you the communication on this point, of one who is well known to, and highly esteemed by, us—the hero of many battles, and victor in them all—the distinguished Commandant of the Yard, Commodore Stewart. It covers the whole ground, and nothing I could say would add strength to his arguments in favor of the measure.

PHILADELPHIA, February 19, 1838.

The subject of a dry dock, which it is desirable should be erected at the Navy Yard in Southwark, (South Philadelphia,) is one of high import to the interests of the State, of momentous consideration to the city, particularly to that portion of it where it is contemplated to establish the same, and of great importance to the Navy. We take the liberty of

intruding upon you our remarks in elucidation of the necessity for the work, its practicability, and the high claims the city and the State have on the National Government for this essential improvement to our naval establishment; from the importance of this city by its central position commerce, accessibility, mechanics, supply of every thing essential to ships of war, and from the abundance of almost every material, including seamen.

The disadvantage arising to South Philadelphia from the establishment of the Navy Yard in Southwark, for the last thirty years, has been considerable : this arises from an apprehension of its want of permanency. The almost utter neglect with which its improvements have been treated in comparison with other places, together with the inability of the landed interests of this section of our city to either remove the establishment, or to obtain the completion of the city plan by running the essential streets and avenues through the Navy Yard, has checked the growth of the neighborhood, kept down the value of property, and paralyzed all efforts for its settlement.

Should the Government now do justice to the city, by such improvements in this Navy Yard, and the erection of a dry dock, so essential an appurtenance to a naval establishment, and will give assurance of the permanency thereof, and that it will be used for naval purposes, we have no doubt that the lost value of this portion of the city will be restored, and its vicinity will soon be spread over with a virtuous, industrious, and valuable population of mechanics, essential to the commerce and manufactures of the city, and highly important to the future maritime purposes of this growing nation.

We beg leave to observe, that there are two kinds of artificial dry docks for the purpose of repairing the bottoms of vessels of war

*First.* The simple or single dry dock. This structure is erected on the edge of the channel of a river, having sufficient width and depth to admit of a ship of war being laid across it, for the purpose of hauling her into and out of the dock. They are always constructed of stone of the hardest kind; solidity and durability being of the highest importance. Of this kind we now have two erected; and at Gosport, in Virginia, and one at Charlestown, Massachusetts. We, therefore, beg leave to refer you to the Board of Navy Commissioners for the drawings and views of those docks, their cost, and their importance to the navy, and the establishments where they are erected.

To establish this kind of a dock at the Philadelphia navy yard, would be attended with as little expense and difficulty as at either of the other places; there are, however, some advantages to be derived from a dockage here that neither of the others possess, and which we deem of too much importance to the navy to be overlooked in a comparison with them

The former tediousness of ascending and descending our river and bay constituted the principal disadvantage on comparison with the other places, but that is now, in a great measure, removed, through the facilities afforded by steam tow boats whenever expedition is essential, and transforms a former disadvantage to our ships of war and naval establishment here into a decided advantage over the other places, in the great security afforded the establish-

ment, as well as to the vessels of war in ordinary, from the remoteness from attacks of an enterprising enemy, from security of our vessels from destruction by the worm, and in the difference of the water, the preservation of their copper from corrosion and fouling substances of oysters, barnacles, and grass, and its consequent better condition for service.

*Second.* The lock dock, as represented by the drawings transmitted with the Hon. John Sergeant, have manifold and important advantages over the simple or single dock. For instance, while one ship is undergoing repairs in the dry dock required on her bottom, another ship may be repairing her top side in the lock, which constitutes a wet dock, and affords at all times a secure and safe place against all kinds of currents and ice. There is at no time after a ship is docked, any considerable pressure on the gates of the dry dock, as all that will be there required will be tide gates only—hence, no disaster can happen to the ship, the dock, or the workmen employed in the repairs, by the bursting in of the gates or overflow of freshets. In the hot months the workmen will not have their health endangered by the evaporation or wet exhalations of the dock, as the ship being placed above low water mark, the dock can be drained every low tide.

The difference between the two docks is, that in the lock dock the water is let in by back water or pumps, hence the pressure on the gates is but momentary while docking a ship, and is *outward*; while, in the single dock, the water is pumped out, and the pressure is *inward*, consequently it is immense and constant on the gates, which are always leaking, and the water springing into the dock, and the bottom is kept overflowed and wet, which requires almost constant pumping for the purpose of draining it off.

The channel in the Delaware, in front of the Navy Yard, being twice or thrice as wide as that at Gosport, it seems peculiarly adapted to this kind of dock, that is, the lock dock; and the Schuylkill water works could readily raise the water of that river the additional few feet which would be required for the back water purposes of this dock; hence no pumps or pumping works would be required in the Navy Yard.

We are aware that some very intelligent persons on this subject would deem it the best policy to concentrate all works of this kind at one or two Navy Yards, and by this concentration simplify the naval establishments and lessen their expense; but as all works of this sort must be adapted to a state of war, it will best become us to look with a single eye to such a consequence, and taking in connexion therewith our peculiar situation as regards other powers against whom we must provide for such a state of things, and conjoining thereto the consideration of our varied and extensive sea coast, with the peculiarity of our harbors, coasting trades, and commercial towns, it would seem to us the better policy to spread along this extensive coast, wherever the facilities of our harbors will admit, the means of effectual repairs and equipments for our ships of war. They will then, in case of disaster, not be obliged to struggle against winds and currents, perhaps in a disabled condition, to gain an isolated place where their disabilities can be remedied, and they in a short time be enabled to resume their hostile attitude, as they

will, at all times, have a port under their lee which they can readily gain.

In case your fleets and ships of war are obliged to resort only to two or three places for repairs, &c., would there not be too many collected at those two or three places for a speedy refitment, and would it not be too exhausting for their means of supplying them? Would not such a concentration afford an enemy too much facility for a more effectual blockade of such force, while, at the same time, the enemy's force being concentrated on such cruising grounds, the opportunity for our ships of war striking at them in detail would be much lessened?

On the other hand, should the six or eight dry docks which may be required for the repairs of our ships, instead of being concentrated at two or three of our naval stations, be spread along our coast, at six or eight stations, would it not scatter an enemy's force collected on our coast to restrain it, in such manner as would effectually expose them to capture in detail, yield better protection to our coasting and other commerce, from a portion of it being at all times in the vicinity for its defence, instead of the whole being concentrated, and probably blocked up by superior force?

The destructive effects of the sea water on the copper of vessels' bottoms, are strikingly exemplified in the case of the Ohio 74. That ship was launched in 1820, was never fitted out, but literally rotted to the water's edge, at the Navy Yard in New York; and, after receiving thorough and expensive repairs, it was necessary to send her to Boston to be docked and newly coppered, it having been found that the salines of the water had literally eaten the copper off of her bottom. This one fact shows the utility of placing our vessels, where it can be done, when in ordinary, in fresh water, for the preservation of their copper, and the preventing of their being fouled by barnacles, &c.; and the other clearly demonstrates the necessity of our having a dry dock at New York, and all the naval establishments, for, in time of war, vessels cannot be taken from the port where they are fitted, to another, to be docked, without great risk of being captured by an active and vigilant enemy. Besides, it may be very much doubted whether, in the long run, the more numerous establishments would not prove the most economical, when the great expense of transporting heavy ships of war from one place to another, the delay incident thereto, and the loss of their services in consequence, at periods which often present themselves in a state of war, for a serious attack on the fleets, or detachment from them, of an enemy.

The policy of distributing the national employments, so far as can be done, with a general view to justice, throughout our extensive country, cannot be doubted; it augments and improves our mechanics and artificers, gives bread to a portion of the laboring classes, induces the improvement of our cities and navigable waters, contributes to a more efficient and general defence of the places, renders our citizens more patriotic and contented with their Government, and, by the additional interest which it gives them, more willing to defend it.

All of which is most respectfully submitted,  
by Your most obedient,

And very humble servants,  
CHAS. STEWART,  
H. HENRY.

You have now the opinion of a veteran seaman, and a man of experience—one sent here by the Department to take charge of the Navy Yard as a compliment. They have given him the *shadow*, but not the substance of command. Had they assigned him an old battered hulk instead of a noble three decker, the honor would have been about the same. There is no life—no animation—no business—no bustle, to gratify his eyes. The shop windows are closed—the forge fires out, and the clink of the hammer is seldom heard—all is silence, and the yard, it would seem, is doomed to perish of inanition. If the distinguished gentleman now at the head of the Navy Department found it a *dull* and *dreary* spot, and that it suffered by a comparison with more favored stations, I hope he will attribute it to the true cause, the neglect and injustice, if not of his predecessors, of the Navy Board, and the Bureaus, which constitute a part of the supervisory powers of this branch of the public service, at Washington, and not permit their prejudices to sway his judgment. I charged upon the Navy Board, as far back as 1837, an unfriendly feeling to this station and favoritism as to others, and I have seen nothing since to change my opinion, but much to confirm it. This Board was abolished in 1842, and Bureaus made to take its place. There was a change in the organization, but not, to some extent, in the men, certainly none in the policy by which some of the members were governed. A few of these yet remain, and with them the feeling, to which I have deemed it my duty to call your attention. We ask no boon—request no favor, but demand as a right the proper uses of the Navy Yard and the Defences of the Delaware. These are not merely questions of City interest, but they belong to the State and the Union.

It is for you to say what shall be done to vindicate our claims and obtain our due. I am impelled by no prompter but truth—seek no object but justice. The appropriations must be made by Congress, and to their wisdom, the matter may be safely confided. But these appropriations, as to extent, are mainly governed by official communications. If there be any prejudice or bias in quarters from whence such recommendations must in the first place come, not only our own im-

mediate representatives, but those of the State at large should look to it, and prevent wrong from being continued—we have suffered until patience ceases to be a virtue.

I had intended to examine the subject of the defences of the Delaware in detail, but I find that I have not merely trespassed upon your time, but exhausted your patience. It is a matter that cannot now be canvassed here, and I propose to leave it in charge of a special Committee.

Thanking you, therefore, for your indulgence, I propose the following preamble and resolutions, which I hope will meet with your unanimous adoption.

Col. JAMES PAGE then offered the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously approved:

Whereas The difficulties existing between the United States and Great Britain have called the earnest and undivided attention of the American people and government to the state of our defences; And whereas, it must be apparent to every thinking man, that in the event of a war with a nation which claims the empire of the ocean, we must mainly rely upon the Navy, and be prepared again to protect our commerce and defend our shores by opposing to the armada of our enemy an efficient fleet of our own; And whereas, although the apprehensions felt of a rupture with England at no distant day prove unfounded, as, saving the rights and honor of our common country, we ardently hope they may; yet, since the merely being prepared for a vigorous defence is often the surest way of preventing the attack, and since we can have no guarantee for the future—therefore

Resolved, That this meeting view with great satisfaction the disposition manifested by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, to enquire into the actual state of our naval defences, and to extend and improve them whenever and wherever they may be deemed inadequate.

Resolved, That in view of the great length of our Atlantic and Southern seaboard, and of the facilities thereby necessarily offered for invasion and depredation by armed vessels from the numerous British ports and places of rendezvous, by which we are upon almost all sides surrounded, the naval arm of our national defence is a reliance, the perfection of which no sectional or party feelings should, at any time or in any place, impede or interfere with; since the safety and protection afforded by the Navy, like the glory our gallant tars have in three wars shed upon our flag, belong to the country and to the whole country.

Resolved, That in the establishment of Dry or floating Docks, and general Naval Depots, regard should be had chiefly to the geographical advantages of the situation—the proximity of the material market—the excellence and cheapness of labor, and the value of the territory falling most immediately within the protection which such a station or depot would afford.

Resolved, That applying these tests to Phil-

adelphia, she will be found to have claims which should long ago have procured her what she has urged hitherto so patiently, so convincingly and so vainly, viz: a Dry Dock for the repair and fitting of the national marine. No port in the Union offers great advantages in point of situation—it is central with respect to the Eastern seaboard, possesses an all-sufficient channel, a salubrious climate, plentiful and cheap markets, and an industrious, hardy and patriotic population. The market for material in all its varieties is near and always open; the skill of our shipwrights is famous throughout the world, and has a monument in every ship which they have set afloat for the Navy, while Philadelphia, as the second city in the United States in point of numbers, and in other respects the first, and the rich territory depending upon her, must surely have claims to the protection of the National Government, which even sectional prejudices cannot deny.

Resolved, That in the present state of the Naval Depot at this port, Philadelphia incurs all the danger but reaps none of the advantages of such a station; since it is of just enough importance to court, without being prepared to repel the attack of an enemy.

Resolved, That if the unanimous opinion of experienced men be of any account, the cost of building a Dry Dock which will be sufficient for all the purposes of repairing and refitting will be far below the sum that will be required at any other contemplated point, while the expense of keeping it in perfect repair must also be proportionably less.

Resolved, That as steam vessels of war must now become an important, if not the most powerful means of defence for our coasts and harbors, this station possesses advantages and facilities for their construction and use, no where else to be found in the country, since coal and iron can be had in abundance and at vastly cheaper rates than at other stations, and the machinery procured in greater perfection.

Resolved, That in consideration of these facts we do earnestly urge upon the Government the propriety of establishing a Dry Dock and a General Naval Depot at this port, and that we put the request not upon the basis of favor, but upon the score of right—that we ask it not merely for our own sake, but for the country's.

Resolved, That while we deem the proper use of the Navy Yard and the erection of a Dry Docks as of primary importance, in the defence of Philadelphia; we must remember it is not all that must be done—and that we trust that the necessary repairs to Fort Mifflin and the erection of fortifications on the Pea Patch, and other points, will neither be forgotten nor undervalued by the wisdom of Congress.

On motion, Resolved, That the following gentlemen be a committee to nominate three other committees to carry out the objects contemplated by the meeting:

HON. JOHN T. SMITH.  
HYMAN GRATZ,  
HENRY LELAR,  
SAMUEL V. MERRICK.  
GEN. GEO. CADWALADER,  
COL JAMES PAGE,  
LEWIS PALESKE,  
THOMAS D. GROVER.

Mayor Swift was called for, but having left the place, John Perry briefly addressed the meeting, when on motion,

Resolved, That this meeting do now adjourn.

JOHN C. MARTIN,  
HENRY J. BIDDLE,  
WOODBURNE POTTER,  
JOSHUA P. HAVEN, Secretaries.

PHILADELPHIA, January 28, 1846.

At a meeting of the general committee for the nomination of committees to consider and report upon subjects embraced in action of a public meeting assembled in the Saloon of the Chinese Museum, on the 27th inst., for the purpose of soliciting the attention of Congress to the "Defences of the Delaware, the establishment of a Dry Dock, and the improvement of the Navy Yard at this place," it was Resolved, that three committees be appointed, to consist of five persons each, with power to fill vacancies in their bodies, whose duties shall be to take charge of the subjects respectively apporportioned to each, and report upon the same to a joint committee composed of the several committees, to be convened at the call of the Chairman of either, and that the said joint committee be instructed to transmit copies of their reports, together with the proceedings of the public meeting, to the proper authorities at Washington.

The following committees were appointed:

*Dry Dock.*

PROF. WALTER R. JOHNSON,  
ISAAC W. NORRIS,  
LEWIS PALESKE,  
THOMAS SPARKS,  
JACOB VAUGHAN,  
WOODBURNE POTTER, Sec'y.

*Navy Yard.*

THOMAS HAYES.  
JOHN T. SMITH,  
THOMAS D. GROVER,  
HENRY LELAR,  
FRANCIS LYONS,  
JOSHUA P. HAVEN, Sec'y.

*Defences of the Delaware.*

GEN. GEORGE CADWALADER,  
COL. JAMES PAGE,  
HON. SAM'L EDWARDS, Del. Co.  
SAMUEL V. MERRICK,  
ALFRED DU PONT, Delaware.  
HENRY J. BIDDLE, Sec'y.

On motion, it was Resolved, That the proceeding of the meeting be published.

GEORGE CADWALADER, Chairman.  
JOSHUA P. HAVEN, Secretary.





